**To:** NOAA Science Center Director and NOAA Fisheries RA or DRA

**From:** Mike Bussell, Director, Office of Water and Watersheds, Environmental Protection Agency, Region 10 and

Joelle Gore, Acting Chief, Coastal Programs Division, Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

**Subject:** Request for assistance from NOAA's Fisheries Service on identifying the best available scientific information regarding habitat needs of coho salmon and other anadromous fish and best management practices to ensure protection of coho salmon and other anadromous fish habitat for the mid coast of Oregon

EPA and NOAA are party to a settlement agreement regarding Oregon's Coastal Nonpoint Pollution Control Program (CNPCP). Per the settlement agreement, by the end of calendar year 2012, EPA and NOAA's Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management (OCRM) will be making an initial assessment of whether Oregon's CNPCP satisfies all of conditions placed on it, including whether implementation-ready total maximum daily loads (IR TMDL) approach for the Mid-Coast Basin will likely result in actions to achieve and maintain water quality standards and whether the state's plan for updating TMDLs throughout the CNPCP management area would satisfy the outstanding forestry condition on Oregon's CNPCP. By November 2013, EPA and NOAA/OCRM will need to determine if Oregon has fully satisfied all conditions placed on its CNPCP, including the need to identify and begin applying additional management measures where water quality impairments and degradation of beneficial uses are attributable to forestry exist.

A key element of the State's approach to ensuring protection of water quality and beneficial uses, such as salmonid spawning and rearing, is completion of IR TMDLs. IR TMDLs constitute a new approach for addressing water quality and beneficial uses in Oregon. In addition to establishing load allocations and surrogate management targets such as site-potential shade, IR TMDLs are likely to include descriptions of management practices (BMPs) and restoration efforts necessary to meet State water quality standards and support beneficial uses.

Oregon's Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) has convened local advisory and technical advisory groups to help the State develop IR TMDLs and associated BMPs and restoration efforts. To ensure that these groups have the benefit of the best available scientific information regarding the habitat characteristics necessary for the recovery of coho salmon, and which could inform the development of BMPs and restoration strategies, we request that you provide relevant information to DEQ as soon as possible (the IR TMDL advisory and technical groups are meeting throughout June and July 2012). In addition, it would be greatly appreciated if you would collaborate with DEQ to refine the science input and be available to answer follow up questions DEQ may have regarding the information you are able to provide. Specifically, we request answers to the following questions and links to, or electronic copies of, relevant studies and analyses:

1. What habitat conditions are essential for recovery of coho salmon and support of other anadromous fish on forested lands?
2. What are the habitat variables currently limiting the recovery of coho salmon and affecting other anadromous fish in the coastal Oregon?
3. Are there demonstrated no-cut riparian buffers and/or riparian management scenarios that prevent water temperature increases on forested lands?

4. Can the habitat and biological needs of anadromous fish be met if riparian protection is only provided along fish-bearing streams?
5. Would riparian buffers/management scenarios that prevent water temperature increases be likely to meet the other biological and physical needs of coho salmon and other anadromous fish in coastal Oregon?
6. What management approaches for landslide prone areas are likely to ensure delivery of large wood to streams and sediment delivery rates and patterns that would meet the habitat and biological needs of coho salmon and other anadromous fish in coastal Oregon?
7. What approaches for managing forest road networks would ensure that the effects of legacy roads (e.g., roads built prior to modern road standards or abandoned roads that are currently degrading water quality and stream flow patterns) would not limit the recovery of coho salmon or degrade the habitat of other anadromous fish?
8. What habitat conditions and management measures are needed to recover coho salmon and support of other anadromous fish in agricultural land urban areas in nonforested, lowland areas?

In addition to helping EPA and NOAA meet settlement agreement commitments and assisting Oregon develop IR TMDLs that meet water quality standards and protect beneficial uses, IR TMDLs could contribute significantly to implementation of coho recovery plans and protection of other salmonids and their habitats.

We thank you for your cooperation on this important issue and look forward to continuing to collaborate to improve water quality and salmonid habitat in Oregon.

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